

Introduction

The Word that Launched the Journey

The journey with the Lord I am describing in this book began with Him calling me into it *with* Him. It was different from anything I could have anticipated or figured out, so much so that I didn't get it initially, yet everything began there.

In 1977, one day after my 33rd birthday, I returned to the Lord.¹ Toward the end of 1978 I was working at the Palo Alto Research Center of Xerox Corporation and had begun to feel out of place there, as a call to ministry was forming in me. I had no clue what that would be, but this particular day, October 24, 1978, I went to lunch in the park in order to walk and pray about the things stirring in my heart. I was asking the Lord: "What do you want me to *do*?" I walked and prayed, the more earnestly as I went along, feeling that I *had* to have some idea, as there was a decided transition going on in my life, and I needed to know how to proceed in it. But I did not hear anything and started back toward the office greatly disappointed. On the way back I saw from the expressway a "Chapel in the Hills," which had been a schoolhouse before being converted into a church.² Going to and from work I had been noticing the cross on top, visible from the expressway. When I saw it ahead, I felt prompted to drive up there. I had lingered at lunch, trying to hear something and so was *already* late in returning. I was talking myself out of the prompting on practical grounds, but when I got to the exit, I just turned off. Once I did I felt peaceful. I would just go see what the Lord would do or say.

There were no cars in the parking lot. It looked bare and deserted. There were three doors. I tried all three and knocked on the one that looked like it might be an office, but they were all locked. I was puzzled; the prompting had been so strong and clear. I went back to my car in a very thoughtful state. I was concerned that I was making up things for the Lord, which was so distressing, but before I settled into complete disqualifying of my hearing, I said: "Lord! What was *that* all about?" What I heard has changed my life beyond my ability to measure. The Lord said:

The Church of My Spirit is deserted and locked.

Those words hit with indescribable power and hushed everything inside me for a time. Then a flood of emotion threatened to overwhelm me. It scared me to hear that. It

was far too huge for me! I became extremely agitated, and afraid to say anything, or even *think* a response. The only thing on my mind was: "Why are You telling *me*; what can *I* do about it?" I didn't *say* that; but it was a powerful "truth" for me. I hoped that staying silent would dispel the upheaval in my heart. Instead, it was heightened because the same words were repeated, several times, and seemingly louder and more insistent each time: **THE CHURCH OF MY SPIRIT IS DESERTED AND LOCKED!** So finally, realizing He was not going to stop, and quite undone by the presence and insistence of God, I said: "I *know* it, Lord!"

Actually, I "knew" very little. When I came back to the Lord, it was due to an inescapable sense of being encountered by Him. After I gave up resisting that idea and accepted Him, I heard many things from Him. I walked and talked with Him for months, writing down the things I heard in my journal. When I began attending a church several months later, I gradually discovered that there was great controversy in the church about whether the Lord talks to His children. I found that puzzling, as I had spent months in the Scriptures, and they reported Him talking to His children regularly. On the strength of my limited experience alone, I responded: "I know it, Lord."

When I said that, the agitation ceased. It was replaced by a deep stillness and indescribable peace. Then I heard a very gentle question:

"Well?"

It is difficult to describe what that one word question imparted to me: would I *care* about a condition He cared about, would I join Him in it somehow, would I share His heart and priorities; what would be my response? I drove back to work astounded and shaken, but having *no* idea that the Lord had answered the question I asked Him in the park: "What do You want me to do?" I also had no clue how long it would take me to hear through what He meant in those few words or understand the heart conditions that hold the reality He announced in place.

¹ The events surrounding my return are described in an earlier book, *A Heart's Returning*.

² Several years prior to this event I had lived just down the street from the schoolhouse and walked by it many times. It held no message for me then because I didn't know the Lord was at hand.